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# THE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE OF TO-DAY\*

BY JOSEPH S. AUERBACH

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IN a tragic hour like this, when civilization seems threatened to be engulfed in the waters of desolation, our emotions almost forbid us to turn our thoughts to aught else, than to the issue which is to determine how history shall be privileged or required to chronicle the story of the world. With confidence, however, that in the end the animal is not to efface man from the earth, perhaps this is peculiarly an hour—solemn always as the graduate stands upon the threshold of life—for you to take account of the things of which you are possessed in attainments and purpose. Let me, therefore, after the way of my profession, make of you certain inquiries, to some of which only I can suggest in part the answer, for the record of your lives will be the adequate answer to them all. Nor shall I have an apology to offer because these inquiries in a measure concern the need and duty of the hour; on the contrary, an apology would be due you if they did not.

Understanding the futility and peril of any other attitude, have you by study and reflection concerning the world of to-day, acquired the conviction that the uncompromising truth must now and always be the creed and religion of American citizenship; and are you to seek after the wisdom that is the foster-child of knowledge and the faith that is grafted on the growth of reason?

As you have been obtaining understanding of some few things, have you approached to mastery over thought and expression? Have you starved the emotional side of your nature, or confused mere emotions with ideas? Do you appreciate how knit together must be the practical with the

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\* A portion of the Commencement Day address delivered at George Washington University, June, 1918.

ideal and beautiful of life? Is it your ambition to be well-balanced in judgment and conduct? Do you consider your intellectual possessions acquired here as a kind of ornamental veneer, and is to you culture a thing apart from life?

Do you realize the debt you owe to yourselves and to the State, and that it can be discharged only by a service in which the mind and the soul have the assignment of an equally important part? What in your conception is to distinguish you above your fellow-men—not alone for your own usefulness and fame—but for the purpose of paying that debt? What are you to have by way of assets wherewith to pay it, and is there in your minds any foreboding that it will be unpaid, for the reason that you have been obliged to confess to a sorry bankruptcy? How sincere is your gratitude toward the University that during these vital years has been the nourishing mother to you all?

Of these enquiries surely you will agree with me that the most vital is as to your attitude towards the truth; for at no time has there been a more crying need for us to understand the destructive consequences of intellectual error and cowardice.

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It cannot fairly be said, that even the Church is an uncompromising seeker after the truth. Who can have the hardihood to assert this, when an English bishop seriously ascribes not a few of the embarrassments of the present world-war to our intolerance of long sermons? Not long ago, at a patriotic service in one of the most prominent churches of New York City, a well-known clergyman delivered the address or sermon or whatever its proper characterization may be. On an occasion when hearers should have been stirred to the depths of their souls, the sacrilege was announced that this war had been decreed by God as a punishment to men for rejecting certain miraculous incidents of the Bible. In varying form this was harped upon, as a brutal, tribal god was enthroned in the stead of an overruling Providence. Before the Bar of that pulpit the illustrious dead, that had toiled with ceaseless devotion over the intellectual and spiritual fabric of civilization, were hailed as the enemies of mankind, because of their rejection of some forbidding orthodox views of yesterday. Pragmatism was

denounced as a kind of ecclesiastical crime. Ascetic detachment from the world or priestly presumption furnishes no excuse for such rhetorical intemperance, at a time when not only laymen but prominent divines are insisting that belief in none of the miraculous incidents of the Bible is essential to religious faith. This is no day for attempting to revive the authority of the old scholastic formula: *Ecclesia locuta est, causa finita est*. The roll of English words which, from misuse as a cloak for pretence or even affectation, have deteriorated in meaning is a long one, and the Church should not regard it as without striking significance that many of such words, *pious, sanctimonious, fanatic, zealot* and the like, relate to religious observances. It should be very solicitous not to give occasion for adding to that long roll.

Nor can these illustrations be regarded as peculiar or extreme. For years the Church set its face against the Revised Version of the Bible, with the indefensible intimation that the revisers had taken something vital from its spiritual and literary virtue. Though according to scholars the Revision has faults, its superior accuracy has never successfully been impugned. It was written, too, with reverent pen, and particularly in the renderings of the poetical and the so-called prophetic books it represents a marked advance over the King James Version in stately diction, arresting eloquence and processional beauty. It is likewise true that if proper recourse were had to the Revised Version and to scholarly criticism, errors would be disclosed to which the Church in creed and doctrine and at very solemn services still adheres.

Few well-informed laymen are not conversant with these facts as to the books of the Bible: That many of them were composed at a time wholly remote from the period to which they relate and by persons other than those to whom they are attributed; that few are without emendations and additions by others than the accredited authors; that often the writer in a later age, in order to give greater currency to the work and thus arouse the people from their spiritual and perhaps temporal bondage, appropriated the name of some noted man of past generations; that the prophets were not foretellers but forthtellers, and that out of the apocalyptic literature immediately preceding the Christian Era grew much of the doctrine of the New Testament. Nevertheless the Church as an institution has not taken pains to disseminate

such information which, when properly interpreted, adds immeasurably to the historic and spiritual value of the Bible, and to the high-calling of religion; often it can scarcely be said to have assented to such information.

The Church should be at the head of the advancing column of knowledge, and not content merely to be in the ranks, much less ignominiously to lag behind; but above all things it must not put itself again, as so often through days past, in opposition to that advance. It will not suffice for the Church to insist that it has accepted the truth; it must be able to say, in the words of Jeremiah, that it is valiant for the truth. Can the Church, quickening as has been and should continue to be its mission, fairly deny that, at times, it has not seemed willing to pause longer than did Pilate for a right answer to the abiding question, "What is truth?"

It is abundantly clear to-day that the disinclination of the world to face the truth is mainly answerable for this war which has brought us to the brink where we look into a frightful abyss. A mad nation, had before all men—in book and lecture and degenerate revelry—registered its arrogant purpose to rule or ruin the world. It seemed the easier course to disregard the warning.

Even after the rude awakening of our Allies, we slept on comforted with an elusive dream of peace through a compromise with barbaric greed and crime, when our dreams should have been nightmares, though if we are to apportion the responsibility for this error, a heavier burden will rest upon France and England than upon ourselves. For they, far better than we, could see the blackening war cloud and hear the mutterings of the disastrous storm which was so soon to burst upon the world. France, whose frontiers touched the frontiers of Germany, though alive for years to the menace of its aggression, was for the moment lulled into the almost fatal diversion of staging the farce and burlesque of the Caillaux Trial before a wondering world. England turned a deaf ear to Lord Roberts, as he pleaded in vain for his country, by the addition of a few hundred thousand men to her expeditionary forces, to make ready against the evil day to come—"The Day" of the brutal toast, when German world-dominion in all its terror was to rise on the ruins of the British empire. His beseechings were but "devilish speeches" and his "scheme" was "more than anything

else a plot for the destruction of Liberalism and for the abolition of civil freedom." The hero who had added so much glory to English arms, was covered with obloquy in the Court of Public Opinion, and was threatened with the ignominy of a cancellation of his pension. All the civilized peoples of the world, deaf to the voice of truth in varying degree were guilty of an awful error.

Precisely as we reverence truth and knowledge we must hold fast to the love of that beauty—born of the wedlock of mind and soul—which has been the inspiration of the creative genius of seer and prophet and poet. No one of them without its possession has reached to the highest achievement.

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Huxley with all his clairvoyant vision into some aspects of life cannot be accused of undue idealism. Yet listen to his inspiring words as to mere beauty in the world of Art!

But the man who is all morality and intellect, although he may be good and even great, is, after all, only half a man. There is beauty in the moral world and in the intellectual world; but there is also a beauty which is neither moral nor intellectual — the beauty of the world of Art. There are men who are devoid of the power of seeing it, as there are men who are born deaf and blind, and the loss of those, as of these, is simply infinite. There are others in whom it is an overpowering passion; happy men, born with the productive, or at lowest, the appreciative, genius of the Artist. But, in the mass of mankind, the Aesthetic faculty, like the reasoning power and the moral sense, needs to be roused, directed and cultivated; and I know not why the development of that side of his nature, through which man has access to a perennial spring of ennobling pleasure, should be omitted from any comprehensive scheme of University education.

It is fealty to beauty expressing itself in the love of truth and justice that in great crises of life is able to bend destiny to our will. In our superficial way we had spoken of the levity of the Parisians and the French generally, and even Matthew Arnold,—in one of his American lectures by which, of all his prose writings, he wished most to be remembered,—has some like ill-conceived thoughts. We had failed to understand that the resolve which made Paris beautiful and all the other cities of France fair to look upon, was but one manifestation of a spirit whose creative thought has had expression in a literature that is immortal. For when awakened that spirit was found disciplined and eager to shed blood in trench and onset, not alone to free France from the

ruthless invader—for she long ago could have secured a separate, selfish peace—but to fight on for our people and for all peoples, to preserve the civilization of the world.

Then, too, we must understand that genuine emotion is often but the fruition of lofty ideas even in normal times; and when the call of duty is heard it can exert an electric effect upon thought, whereby sloth is transformed into action and peril into safety. Properly interpreted it is synonymous with devotion in days like these, and is of the very soul of love of country. Do we need more convincing proof of this than the well-nigh miraculous battle of the Marne and the first battle of Ypres; and can we doubt that, when the German hordes threatened Verdun by their murderous assault, the uttered vow *They shall not pass* invested with invincible strength the soldier of France?

Yet while never minimizing the inestimable value of such genuine emotion upon conduct as well as thought, we must accommodate our exhibition of it to the appropriateness of the occasion; for misdirected energy is often more mischievous than inertia. To the brain must be conceded such command over the feelings that each of us may be able to say with Walt Whitman, "I am afoot with my vision," and to have a right understanding of an injunction like this of the Apocrypha, "Weigh thy words in a balance and make a door and a bar for thy mouth." Horace, in his refreshing and inspiring Sixth Epistle of the First Book beginning with the words *Nil admirari prope res est una*,—which are almost as frequently misinterpreted as they are quoted, says:

*Insani sapiens nomen ferat, aequus iniqui,  
Ultra quam satis est virtutem, si petat ipsam.*

And, lest there be doubt of his meaning, he adds:

*Virtutem verba putas et  
Lucum ligna?*

The voice must be lifted up discriminatingly even in prayer; and Wisdom adopted Juvenal as a favorite son, when in that matchless satire he besought mankind to invoke for itself *mens sana in corpore sano*, and depicted how grim ruin can be visited upon us through the granting of our improvident appeals by the too indulgent Gods.

Never let us confound such genuine emotion with mere

spasmodic ebullition of the heart through any of its lachrymose manifestations. Sentiment must not permit itself to languish into sentimentality; and if visions seek the borderland of idle dreams, the Imagination with all its strength of wing will soon exhaust itself in aimless flight.

Nor must we fail to keep company with elevating thoughts on the journey we are to make. And we cannot be in that company unless we cherish the books of literature, for except through the glorious vistas they open up to us we cannot fully see nature or even God. Men may not prefer to continue in a sordid environment and remain unaffected by its contamination. One who goes out from the University willing to forget that Horace and Virgil and Homer lived or to permit the creative books of the world to be dust-covered ornaments on the library shelf, cannot truly live his life; he will be fortunate if he avoids making a lamentable mess of it for himself and for mankind.

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Read the worthy books of the world that they may minister to your highest gratification and intellectual and spiritual joy. This, however, should not be the sole or perhaps the primary purpose. Read great thoughts, think great thoughts, dwell with great thoughts, so that you may utter great thoughts when you are to speak forth as the staunch and convincing advocate of right and wisdom in the momentous days that are upon us.

For if doubts existed that vast changes impend in the life of society, of our nation and of the world, this war has resolved them all. Although considering yourselves bound by those worthy precedents which have met with general acceptance—since form is often of the substance of things—it is essential for you through familiarity with the wisdom of the ages and by independent reflection to understand the extent to which some old conceptions of life shall undergo revision. Change must be a requirement of progress and not the dictate of caprice or fashion. When later the consideration of this grave readjustment is properly uppermost in the minds of men, and there shall be the need for your voice to be heard in an ominous debate, it will not have a responsive audience, unless you know the abyss between the froth of rhetoric and the persuasive restraint of a compelling elo-



quence. Only intimacy with high thinking will give you that mastery over expression which is mastery over opportunity.

I know you are familiar with such thoughts. But I am recalling them to you, because of their immediate application to conditions in the world which are to follow upon a victory; for we should be deeply concerned lest we find ourselves as unprepared for the problems of peace as we were for the problems of war. As high endeavor contends with selfish aim and knowledge with ignorance, the most vital issues concerning not only private property rights but the interests of the Republic are to be the subject of absorbing contention. Time permits me only to enumerate a few of them: The true relation of the State to the individual and the individual to the State; the just attitude of labor to capital and capital to labor; whether labor shall be paid by the mere abundant wage or by a participation in the fruits of its creation and the voice it shall have in the councils of industry; to what extent shall we add to or take from our political, economic and religious creeds; how, if at all, shall our theories of constitutional government undergo revision; which, if any, of the tenets of Socialism shall we adopt or adapt for our guidance; to what enduring purpose shall our new love of country be directed in the day of peace and what kind of military service in and out of our institutions of learning shall we then exact of youth. These along with many other questions—so often the occasion for declamation of demagogue and professional altruist—are soon to be answered by men that fear God and love the State. And when the door of opportunity thus stands wider open than ever before for Wisdom to pass through, shall not the University graduate with shining insignia of disciplined ardor and intelligence be foremost in her great company?

The University graduate should yield to no one in love of letters. As the years go by he should gaze with an increasing joy upon the wonderland of the imagination, which lies outstretched before us with its beckoning beauty. He should know full well that there are dreams to be dreamed even in the day time, and that a man must have recourse to a hobby for his mental health as he would sit astride a horse for his physical health. Yet too many dreams must not be dreamed in detachment from life, and the hobby must not be a foolish plaything with which we rock ourselves to un-

availing sleep. Let it be our belief—much accentuated by the happenings in the world of to-day—that as never before must knowledge and truth be desired, not alone for themselves, but for the inseparable relation they have to the call of God to us to do the work of the world.

If you would understand fully what I mean by this, read *Idea of a University* by Cardinal Newman, and Huxley's lectures on *Science and Education*. None should wish to detract from the just repute of Cardinal Newman's book; but candor compels one to say that throughout it there runs a kind of special pleading for knowledge and truth in association with some discarded religious beliefs. The enthusiastic defense by one of his admirers in the preface of a lately issued edition of the book says of Newman that he set his face rigorously against the school of religious thought known as Modernism. How depressing and confusing is such a view; and slight wonder that these lectures failed of any real accomplishment, with the author's shut-in horizon as to truth which, in the main, he saw but from cloistered walks! Put alongside of this book that of Huxley's and again and again in the refreshing contrast of its bracing atmosphere you come upon such exhilarating lines as these:

In such a University, the force of living example should fire the student with a noble ambition to emulate the learning of learned men and to follow in the footsteps of the explorers of new fields of knowledge. The very air he breathes should be charged with that enthusiasm for truth, that fanaticism of veracity which is a greater possession than much learning; a nobler gift than the power of increasing knowledge; by so much greater and nobler than those, as the moral nature is greater than the intellectual: for veracity is the heart of morality.

If love of truth be our chief article of faith and pursuit of knowledge a religion, all life takes on a new and glorious aspect. Drudgery is set to the music of a song, sight prolongs itself into vision, dreams come true, intellectual serfdom is transmuted into sovereignty of the mind, whilst darkness with sham, pretence and all its baneful brood slinks off in terror of the coming Dawn.

For death takes toll  
Of beauty, courage, youth,  
Of all but truth . . .

Let me say now a few words as to this University that has laid the foundations so well for your education—for I

know from the Faculty here something of the stuff of which you are fashioned—whereon you are to build the edifice of your character and achievement.

What is your thought about this University as you go out into life? Is it a deep and abiding love? What claim is she to have upon you in the future? Do you feel towards this institution as Daniel Webster felt toward Dartmouth College, when, in words broken with emotion, he said:

Sir, you may destroy this little institution; it is weak; it is in your hands! I know it is one of the lesser lights in the literary horizon of our country. You may put it out. But if you do so you must carry through your work! You must extinguish, one after another, all those greater lights of science which for more than a century have thrown their radiance over our land. It is, sir, as I have said, a small college. And yet there are those who love it.

As one of her adopted sons, I have been asked to do my small part toward making this University as great as is the opportunity. Yet if you do not entertain toward your University a feeling kindred to that which Webster had for Dartmouth College, she cannot and ought not to become this greater University for she has no purpose to accomplish.

Let me give an illustration of the thought I wish to convey. Under old conceptions and definitions The Corporation was looked upon largely as an artificial being or legal entity; and this idea still survives in some legal aspects. The modern-day view of the corporation, however, is that it is a collective name standing for the aggregate interests of all its members. So it is with the University as an institution. It is not an abstraction but a reality—to be made a living force by the devotion of those whom their Alma Mater has nourished, and who together constitute the University.

We declaim overmuch about American ideals, but any such declamation which fails to match with the performance of simple duties is not a good asset of the Republic. Have visions but let them be extensions of sights. Cherish ideals, but let them be the outgrowth and fruitage of ideas. Let civic creeds be not mere platform deliverances; and let public zeal proceed from a love of State which shall have its roots thrust deep down in a consciousness of worthy achievement, or at least worthy effort in all that has to do with our daily walk of life.

Be not so foolish as to hope to become the worthy man or woman if you are her thankless child. Let your vow

be that she shall be as "A city set on a hill, that cannot be hid." Yet, remember that by no idle thought or legerdemain or lordly fiat can your University become thus splendid in widening influence, but only by the unremitting watchfulness of those who shall love the very stones of her walls.

It had been my intention to end my address here. But what I have said seems so trivial beside the momentous happenings in the world that I cannot part company with you without adding something as to your peculiar contribution to our country in this hour of her direst need—not alone or primarily of money, time or talent, but of yourselves, according to the abundance of your possessions. In considering what that contribution shall be, let us put far away from us such words as "our bit" or "our best"—words which have become largely worthless with much handling, and which had little value when newly coined. The University graduate should have that to give which will be real and practical as well as academic in the true sense. Do not, however, forget that it is not without justification that *academic* has come to be a kind of reproach, as synonymous with that which is formal and speculative and even visionary. If ever in history surely it is to-day that the University training is to be weighed in the balance. It must not be found wanting.

In the oft-quoted words of *Areopagitica*, which have now a new significance for the world, Milton says:

Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks; methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance.

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So must we feel towards our own country; and the University graduate should make his contribution to Her the more impressive by way of saving response and deed, for its source is at the exhaustless fountains of living waters. He above all others can be quite sure that the emotion born of high purpose will traverse seas and cross continents to inspire our soldiers—who typify all our men under arms—as they contend against evil forces wherewith there can be no compromise. For the spirit of these men will in the end but reflect the spirit of those for whom they fight.

What, then, shall that spirit be in us? Surely something

even more embracing and devotional than it now is quickened though it has become. For while no loyal American should be so foolish as to consider our citizenship at the outbreak of the war as not abreast of that of France or England, or to believe that, as a man, the American soldier was not the equal of the French and the English soldier, or that by experience he could not rival them in discipline and valor, we must nevertheless generously admit that France and England have outstripped us in consecration and heroic endeavor. Unquestionably this in large measure has been due to the agony and bloody sweat of their awful trial; yet to whatever cause it be traceable, the knowledge summons us to a mighty awakening. For the Soldier of the Union cannot wholly be as those other soldiers, unless by the prodigal gift of ourselves to our country he, like them, shall become the incarnation of a people's regenerate life.

Fortified and sustained by this inspiring thought—so made a part of ourselves that we no longer are called upon to refer to it, any more than the man of honor needs to carry about with him the Decalogue as a guide for conduct—let us revert to the imperative duty of the hour. Practical in our thoughts may we remember always that if it be true that Hell is fighting for ascendancy over Heaven, it is equally true that fiends are at war with men. Having pondered much and resolved mightily, we must now translate our faith into action.

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The Colors call to us now to discharge our immeasurable debt of gratitude to our Allies and to save our own imperilled land. And in order that to-day of all days we may understand clearly what is required of us let us visualize this battle line in France, with the thought burnt into our brain of the anguish and waste places of earth, if that line which has been bent shall at last be broken.

We are to fight to prevent that line from being broken and to advance it to the Rhine, and if the sacrifice of life be not too great, to have our armies occupy the territory of Germany; or at least we are to build a wall of bayonets about this mad nation, until she give evidence by abasement and penitential deed, that she is entitled to the absolution which will readmit her into the family of nations. We are to fight to give back to France—the France of splendid chivalry and unconquerable will—the fair provinces of Alsace and Lor-

raine, by the loss of which she was disfigured in an unrighteous war, brought on by Bismarck's now admittedly forged Ems telegram. Then wherever restoration can take place, we are—out of indemnities exacted of Germany—to restore the subjugated parts of Belgium and France of which the German has made in truth "An Empire of Death"; leaving to an admonishing memory such things as cannot be restored as Shrines and Holy Places, whither men shall pilgrimage in days to come, for consecration anew to a contending faith, that shall smite down the brutal hand of might whenever it reaches out to clutch at the throat of right and virtue. We are to fight to stanch the wounds of Belgium bled all but to death. We are to fight for England, our beloved mother-country, whose sentinel ships have stood between us and the murderous crews at Kiel. Her armies, too, have stood side by side of those of France, who united now with England may well repeat the words which Shakespeare put into the mouth of King Philip, when addressing King John in the day of their warfare before the walls of Angiers:

England thou hast not sav'd one drop of blood  
In this hot trial, more than we of France.

If gratitude be not as La Rochefoucauld declares merely the secret desire for favors to come, but the highest devotional instinct with which God has endowed mankind, let us postpone, and if need be for the moment suppress utterly, humanitarian thoughts of the ideal State and a finer world until we shall have paid back to Belgium and France and England and Italy as well, the supreme debt of honor we owe to them for having saved us from an awful doom. If the American Republic stop short of this, our Allies—speaking for the suffering nations, and for God himself—shall be entitled to say in their despair: She left us to the mercy of our enemies and is of those

That keep the word of promise to our ear  
And break it to our hope.

Then, too, have this remaining thought ever present with you, as you go out from this University to fight or to counsel others to fight. Understand that although the soldier is to consider himself the crusader and the messenger of God, he is also to be the Soldier of the Union. He of course is to have in mind a world to be born again to righteousness, but

he must go forth to avenge the death of our helpless men and women and children murdered on the high seas, and the dishonor to our Flag. He is to save our homes and our defenceless loved ones; and above all things, he is to fight to keep from off the hallowed person of the American woman the defilement which is a thousand deaths.

And, in the end, the common interests of civilization are to dictate what the resulting peace shall be, though it must be "as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as justice."

Only if we glory in these thoughts and look upon the lavish gifts of our possessions and of ourselves for the well-being of the Republic and of mankind as a precious privilege, are we entitled to share the incorruptible faith of Isaiah that the Lord of hosts shall be for strength to them that turn back the battle at the gate.

What wondrous words are those of Isaiah!

In that day will the Lord of hosts become a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people; and a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and strength to them that turn back the battle at the gate.

He too, you recall, was speaking of a wavering line of battle, surging into the city and back again to the gate where the foe was overcome. Again there is the bent line, yet of such proportions now that on its steadfastness depends not the fate of a city but the fate of the world. The American soldier has loitered long, but he is on the line at last, and at an hour when that line would surely be broken but for his coming. What a thought to thrill every fiber of our being, that we are to be of the Saviours as we have been of the Saved!

If to that Soldier we thus give all that we have to give, adding to his strength this strength of our fervor and consecration and of our will now to prevail, and to build in the day of Peace a new kingdom upon earth, we may aver in all reverence: The Lord of hosts shall not venture to withhold of His strength from them that are to turn back the battle at the gate.

JOSEPH S. AUERBACH.